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Melissa E. Johnson and Kate Kosturski, "Is the Past Really Prologue? The Effect of a University's Consolidation on Its JSTOR Subscription" (2017). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284316670>

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Is the Past Really Prologue? The Effect of a University's Consolidation on Its JSTOR Subscription

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Abstract

University consolidations do more than just affect students and faculty. Changes to the makeup of a campus and the programs available can have a great influence on needed journal and database subscriptions. The electronic resources and serials librarian from Augusta University and the outreach coordinator from JSTOR investigated how the consolidation of two universities with different academic missions changed the usage of their six JSTOR collections. Using data produced by JSTOR in 2012, prior to consolidation, and compiled again for 2016, the authors describe changes in usage, factors that could affect usage, and the implications for future resources.

History

In June 2001, Augusta State University (ASU), a medium-sized liberal arts college with an FTE of approximately 6,000, subscribed to their first three collections from JSTOR. These first three collections included Arts & Sciences (A&S) I, Ecology/Botany, and General Science. These collections were followed by the addition of Arts & Sciences (A&S) II in December 2001, and Business I and Arts & Sciences (A&S) III in January and December 2003, respectively. The usage for these six collections was fairly consistent.

In fall 2012, along with the other schools in the University System of Georgia, ASU's library implemented a Discovery Service. Instead of having to go the individual databases, students were presented with an opportunity to search all of the databases in a fashion similar to searching Google. Then in January 2013, ASU was consolidated with Georgia Health Sciences University (GHSU) to create Georgia Regents University (GRU), the fourth public research university in the state of Georgia. The GHSU campus, with an FTE of approximately 1,900, was added to the existing JSTOR subscription in 2014. The name of the consolidated university was changed in December 2015 to Augusta University, but there were no other revisions to the access points or to the JSTOR subscription. As of October 2017, Augusta University still subscribes to the six JSTOR packages originally acquired by ASU: Arts & Sciences I, II, and III, Business I, Ecology & Botany I, and Health & General Sciences.

Discussion

The electronic resources and serials librarian coordinated with the outreach coordinator from JSTOR to compare usage before and after consolidation. Statistics compiled by JSTOR in 2012, preconsolidation, and again in 2016, postconsolidation, reveal some interesting trends. JSTOR conveys their statistics in Content Accesses and Significant Accesses. Content Accesses are recorded when an Article View, PDF download, or Citation Capture occurs on the JSTOR platform. Significant Accesses are the total of Article Views, Page Views (after the first), PDF Downloads, Searches, and Browse. Significant Accesses include the data from Content Accesses, plus Page Views, Searches, and Browsers. The Page Views exclude the first page and are only counted when users move on to view the second page. For the period January through December 2012, there were 13,761 Content Accesses for the JSTOR collections at ASU and the number of Significant Accesses for the same period was 62,008 (DiFiore, 2013).

To delve further into the statistics, the authors looked at the statistics for the individual collections. In 2012, the "Use by Collection" statistics revealed that Arts & Sciences I was the most heavily used collection with over 4,500 Content Accesses (DiFiore, 2013). This was followed closely by Arts & Sciences III with over 4,300; then Arts & Sciences II with more than 3,100; Health & General Sciences with over 800; Business, which exceeded 500; and Ecology & Botany I with over 400 (DiFiore, 2013). In reviewing the top 10 Most Accessed Disciplines in 2012, we found an exceedingly high usage of the Language and

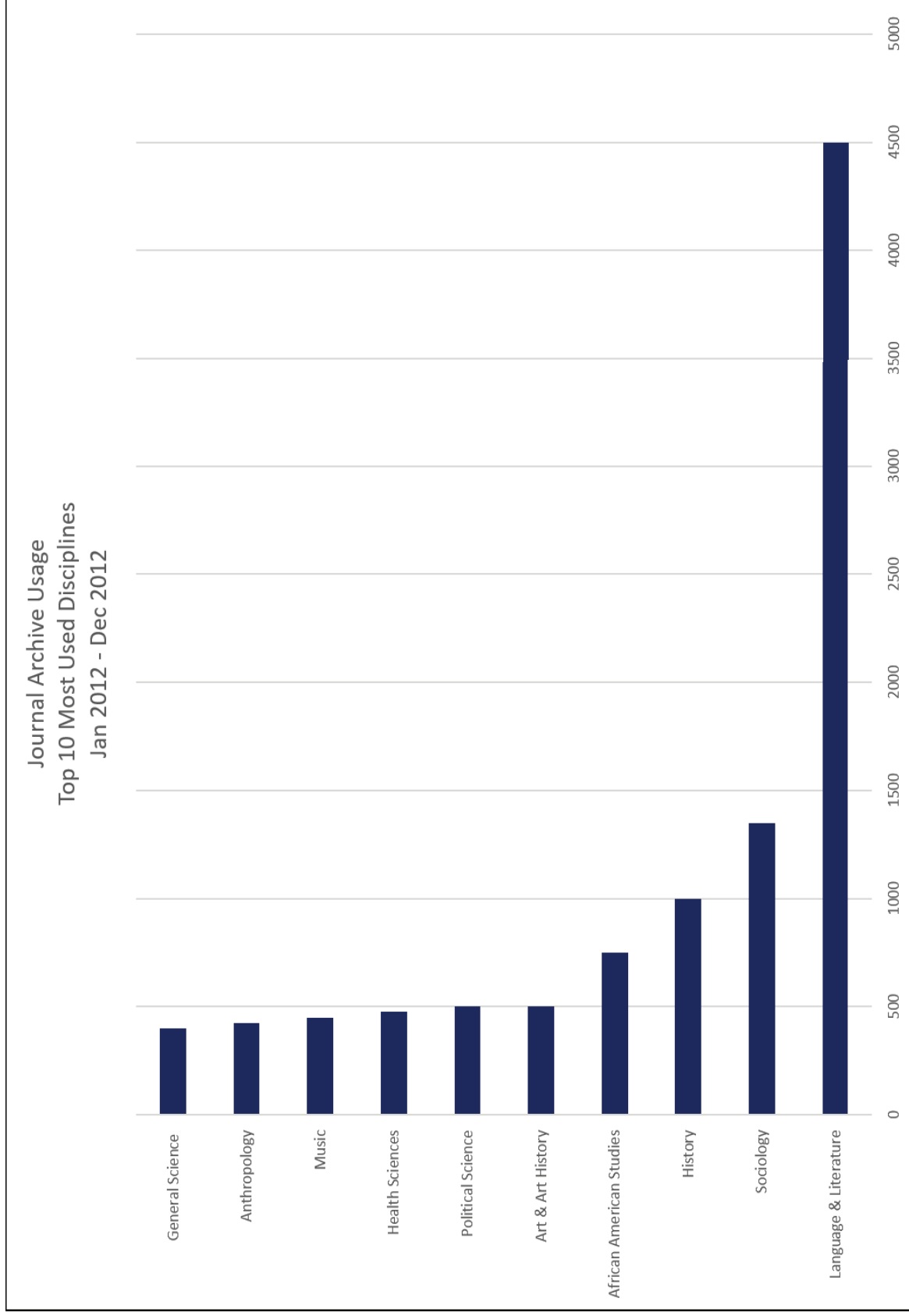


Figure 1. Journal archive usage: Top 10 most used disciplines (Jan. 2012–Dec. 2012).

Literature discipline as compared with the others. Language and Literature titles were accessed more than 4,400 times. In fact, the top five journals with the highest backfile usage were in the Language and Literature discipline. The title with the highest backfile usage was *PMLA* at 631, followed by *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *ELH*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, and *Studies in English Literature* (DiFiore, 2013).

After Language and Literature, the next highest accessed discipline was Sociology, which was only accessed 1,250 times, a difference of more than 3,000 (DiFiore, 2013). From the top 25 journals, *Journal of Marriage and Family* and *American Sociological Review* were the most highly used Sociology titles with 246 and 215 accesses respectively (DiFiore, 2013). After Sociology, the remaining disciplines in the top 10 were History, African American Studies, Art & Art History, Political Science, Health Sciences, Music, Anthropology, and General Science, all disciplines in the social sciences and humanities (DiFiore, 2013) (Figure 1). The first title on the top 25 list in the science field was *BMJ: British Medical Journal*. It was the only title in the Health Sciences discipline that appeared in the top 25. It was used 174 times and was the 11th highest used journal (DiFiore, 2013). The only other title of the most frequently used journals that was not in the social sciences or humanities field was *Science*. It was number 12 on the list of journals with the highest backfile usage and was accessed 160 times (DiFiore 2013).

In addition to the number of accesses, the authors also examined the number of turnaways, the number of attempts to access unlicensed content. In 2012, the highest number of turnaways was in the Arts & Sciences VII collection at 355 (DiFiore, 2013). The majority of those were 10 specific titles in Sociology.

Upon consolidation of the two schools, the JSTOR subscription was expanded to include both campuses. There was an initial decrease in the number of students on the ASU campus, now called Summerville. From fall 2012 to fall 2013 there was a 9.3% decrease in the undergraduate enrollment, most of whom attended ASU and were present on the Summerville Campus (Institutional, 2014). However, with the addition of the students from the Health Sciences Campus, the total number of students increased to 8,995 in fall 2013 (Institutional, 2014). With the additional users, the librarian assumed that the database usage would also increase; however, this was not the case. In reviewing the statistics again in 2016, the subscription usage had actually decreased.

Although Arts & Sciences I was still the most used collection in 2016, Arts & Sciences II became the second most used collection, replacing A&S III, which held that spot in 2012 (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). Health & General Sciences moved into the third highest used collection followed by A&S III, Business, and Ecology & Botany in that order. One surprising fact was the amount of the decrease. The usage for A&S I had decreased from over 4,500 accesses in 2012 to nearly 2,500 accesses in 2016 (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). The other collections revealed a decrease as well: A&S II with nearly 1,600 content accesses, Health & General Sciences and Arts & Sciences III with nearly 1,100 content accesses, Business I with nearly 400 content accesses, and Ecology and Botany I with nearly 200 content accesses (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017).

The most highly used disciplines also changed. Language and Literature, which was the most used discipline in 2012, maintained the top position in 2016; however, the number of Content Accesses decreased from 4,477 to 995 (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). Where Sociology had previously been the second most highly used discipline in 2012, Health Sciences moved into the second position in 2016 with 738 (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). Sociology was still highly used, but moved into third place, followed by Statistics, which was new to the top 10. Political Science, History, and General Science followed, and African American Studies, which had been the fourth most highly used discipline in 2012, moved into eighth position (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). Anthropology and Philosophy completed the top 10 disciplines (Figure 2). Where Health Sciences and Statistics moved into the top 10 disciplines in 2016, Art & Art History and Music moved out. This reveals a shift in journal usage from the humanities into the science-related STEM fields.

In 2012, journals from the Language and Literature discipline maintained the top five positions for highest usage (DiFiore, 2013). In 2016, however, a Sociology journal, *American Sociological Review*, was the most highly used and was accessed 300 times (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). This journal was followed by *Science*, which is found in the General Science collection, with 281 accesses; then the *American Journal of Sociology* with 280 accesses in the Sociology discipline; *BMJ: British Medical Journal* in the Health Sciences Collection with 263; and *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology* with 248 accessions (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). These last two titles are both from the Health Sciences discipline.

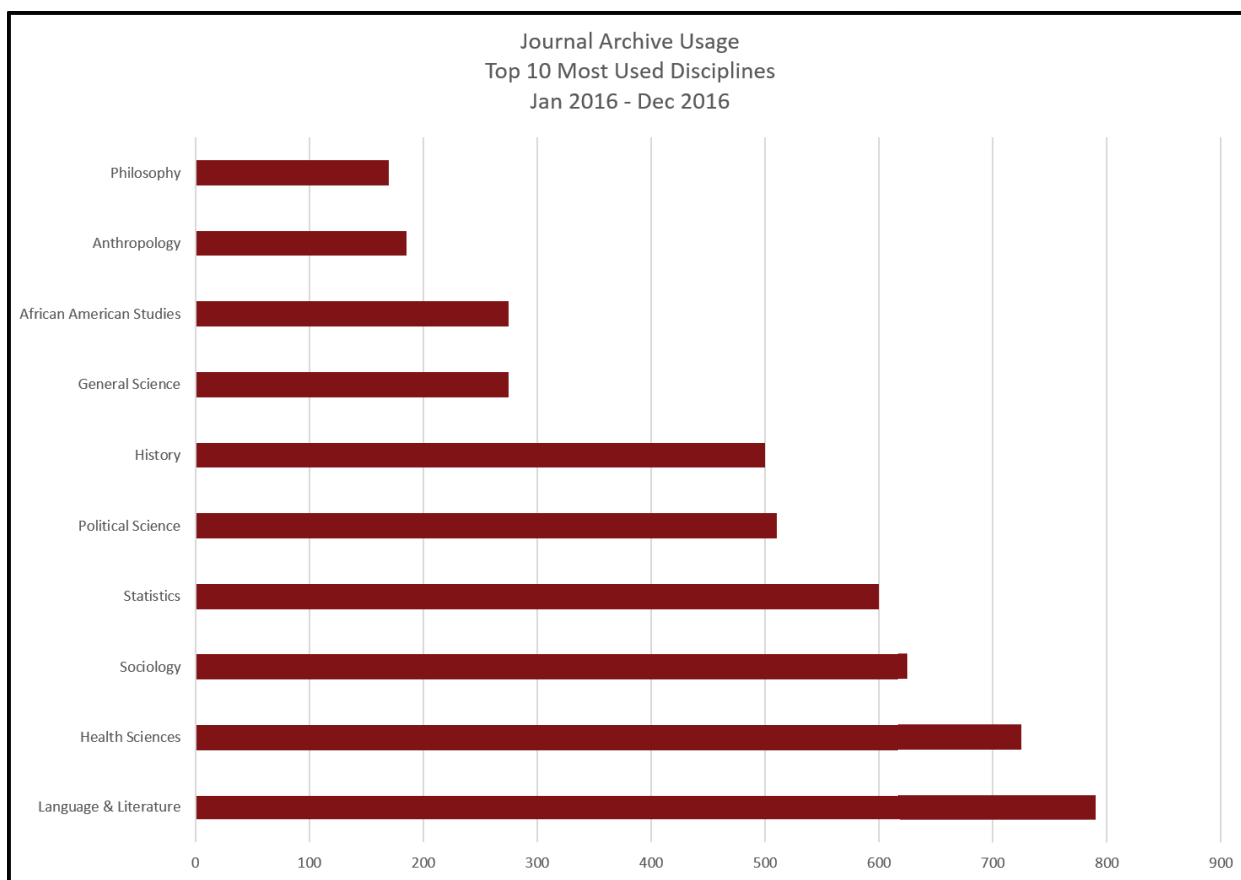


Figure 2. Journal archive usage: Top 10 most used disciplines (Jan. 2016–Dec. 2016).

Also moving into the top 10 journals in 2016 were the *Journal of the American Statistical Association* with 242 accesses, *American Political Science Review* with 216 accessions, *Biometrics* at 169, and *Gender and Society* at 166 (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). Two of those titles were from the Statistics discipline. *The New England Quarterly*, which was accessed 158 times, was the only journal from the Language and Literature discipline found in the top 10 in 2016 (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). *PMLA*, which had previously been the most frequently used journal in 2012, moved into the 15th spot (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017).

Another change in the subscription from 2012 was in the turnaways reported. Instead of only the 355 turnaways from the Arts & Sciences VII collection in 2012, the number of turnaways increased to more than 550 for the same collection (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). Included in the turnaways for 2012, the discipline with the highest number was Sociology. This was followed by Business, History, Language & Literature, then Marketing & Advertising. In 2016,

although Sociology remained the discipline with the highest number of turnaways, it was followed by Statistics, then Health Policy, Marketing & Advertising, then History (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017). For Statistics and Health Policy to move into the top five turnaways reveals a shift in desired research from the social sciences to the hard sciences.

One factor that librarians and institutions need to take into consideration when subscribing to, evaluating, and maintaining electronic databases is the cost per use. Despite there not being a cost increase in the archival journal fees since JSTOR was first acquired back in 2001, the decreased usage created an increase to the cost per use for Content Accesses. In 2012 the cost per use for Content Access was \$1.12; however, in 2016 that cost increased to \$2.38 (DiFiore & Kosturski, 2017).

Conclusions

Overall, despite consolidating two universities and adding the Health Sciences Campus to the original

JSTOR subscription, there was a marked decrease in usage for all of the JSTOR collections. Although the Language & Literature discipline maintains the highest use and Arts & Sciences I is still the most used collection, the change in the makeup of the school and students is visible in the disciplines being used most. Health Sciences and Statistics moved into the top 10 disciplines in 2016, taking the place of Art & Art History and Music. This reveals a shift in database usage from the humanities into STEM.

One possible explanation for the shift away from the humanities resources was a change in the Freshman Composition Program. This program, through which every undergraduate student matriculates, changed from a literature-based class to theme-based in 2013. This provided students with the ability to conduct more research in other disciplines instead of focusing on literary criticism. Not only seeking research specifically in the Language & Literature discipline, students investigated societal and health issues and used resources in the Health Sciences and Sociology disciplines as well. There was also an overall change in the makeup of the student population with a stronger focus on the sciences and STEM as opposed to the liberal arts. New undergraduate degree programs were introduced at the school, including a BS in Ecology and a BS to MD program.

Not only the addition of students from the new campus, but the addition of faculty researchers on the Health Sciences Campus also affected the statistics. Having electronic access to archival content of medical journals like *BMJ: British Medical Journal* provided a much more streamlined ease of access. Previously, researchers would have to physically go into the library on the Health Sciences Campus to

access print copies of those journal archives. This ease of access has increased the use of the medicine and statistics disciplines.

Another possible explanation for the decreased statistics is the implementation of the Discovery Service in October 2012 (Board, 2017). Previously, students would go directly to JSTOR to obtain access to the database and retrieve content. Once the Discovery Service was implemented and students could utilize a single search box similar to Google's, they no longer specifically went to JSTOR. Instead, they retrieved the first relevant articles returned from a Discovery Search. Often, the initial results returned from their searches were not from JSTOR, but from other available databases.

One more recent change that has the potential to affect the statistics yet again is the 2017 implementation of Alma and Primo by all of the schools in the USG system. How this implementation will be reflected in the database statistics has yet to be determined. Augusta University will monitor the statistics from the JSTOR side, as well as through Alma and the Discovery Admin sites to note any disparities. Turnaways will also be monitored to see which new collections should be investigated for future subscriptions.

University consolidations have more far-reaching effects than simple increases in student numbers and programs. While there were some factors that can be pointed to as direct impacts of ASU's absorption of GHSU, others were prompted by longer term changes. It is vital to look closely at both partners in the consolidation to see where similarities and differences lie, and tailor library database subscriptions appropriately.

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